



## ORATION OF HON. GEORGE BANCROFT.

Washington's Birth-Day (Feb. 22) was commenced in the city of New York by a public meeting of the religious authorities at the Cooper Institute. The great hall was densely crowded long before the meeting was organized. After the reading of Washington's Farewell Address by George H. Moore, Esq., an able and elaborate Oration was delivered by Hon. George Bancroft. Below are some extracts from Hon.

At last "we have fallen on evil days." "The propitious smiles of Heaven"—such are the words of Washington—"can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right." During eleven years of perverse government those rules were disregarded, and it came to pass that men who should firmly avow the sentiments of Washington and Jefferson and Franklin and Chancellor Livingston were disfranchised for the public service; that the spotless Chief Justice whom Washington placed at the head of our Supreme Court could by no possibility have been nominated for that office, or confirmed. Nay, the corrupt influence invaded even the very home of justice. The final decree of the Supreme Court, in its decision on a particular case, must be respected and obeyed; the present Chief Justice has on one memorable appeal accompanied his decision with an impassioned declamation, wherein with profound immorality which no one has as yet fully laid bare, treating the United States as a shrew to be taunted by an open scold of the facts of history, with a dready prepared collection of evidence which had never been published or weakly suppressed, compensating for want of evidence by confidence of assertion, with a partiality that would have disgraced an advocate neglecting the humane decisions of Colonial Courts, and the enduring memorials of colonial state-books, in the party zeal to prove that the fathers of our country held the negro to have "no rights which the white man was bound to respect." He has not only denied the rights of man and the liberties of mankind, but has not left a foothold for the liberty of the white man to rest upon.

That ill-starred disputation of Taney, who, I trust, did not intend to hang out the flag of Disunion, is the fountain head of this rebellion: that offence to the conscious memory of the millions convulsed our country with the excitement which swept over those of us who vainly hoped to preserve a strong and sufficient, though narrow isthmus that might stand between the conflicting floods. *No nation can adopt that judgment as its rule; and lie; the judgment has in it no element of political vitality.* It will not say it is an invocation of the dead past; there never was a past that accorded such opinions. If we accept the opinions received in the days when our Constitution was framed, we will not take them our Chief Justice; we will let the dead speak for themselves.

How will our American magistrates sink when arraigned as he will be before the tribunal of humanity; how terrible will be the verdict against him, when he is put in comparison with Washington's political teacher, the great Montesquieu, the enlightened magistrate of France, in what are esteemed the worst days of her monarchy! The argument from the difference of race which Taney thrusts forward with passionate confidence, as a proof of complete disqualification, is brought forward by Montesquieu as a scathing satire on all the blood of despots who were supposed to uphold slavery as tolerable in the state. The rights of mankind, that precious word which had no equivalent in the language of Hindostan, or Judea, or Greece, or Rome, or any ante-Christian tongue, found its supporters in Washington and Hamilton; in Franklin and Livingston; in Ovis, George Mason and Gadsden; in all the greatest men of our early history.

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Washington not only upheld the liberty of the ocean. He was a thorough Republican. And how has our history justified his preference? How has this very rebellion borne testimony to the virtue and durability of popular institutions. The rebellion which has turned down was the expression of the rich, of merchant, of man, who count labours as their capital. Our widely-extended suffrage is not only utterly innocent of it—it is the power which will not fail to crush it. The people prove their right to a popular government; they have chosen it and kept it in healthy motion, they will sustain it now, and hand it down in its glory and its power to their posterity. And this is true not only of men who were born on our soil, but of foreign born citizens. Let the European skeptic about the large extension of the suffrage come among us; and we will show him a spectacle wonderful in his eyes, grand beyond his power of conception. That which in this contest is marked above all that has appeared is the oneness of heart and purpose with which all the less wealthy classes of our people of all nationalities are devoted to the flag of the Union.

The foreigners whom we have taken to our hearts, and received as fellow-citizens, have been true to the country that had adopted them; have been sincere, earnest, and ready for every sacrifice. Slavery is the slow poison which has wrought all the evil; and a proud and selfish oligarchy are the authors of the conspiracy.

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If the views of Washington with regard to the slave-trade command themselves to our approbation after the lapse of nearly ninety years, our opinions on slavery are clear, and it is well to follow them, that have established peace among us forever. On the 12th of April, 1786, he wrote to Robert Morris: "There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery." This was his fixed opinion; so that in the following month, he declared to Lafayette: "By degrees the abolition of slavery very certainly might and assuredly ought to be effected, and that, too, by legislative authority." On the 9th of September of the same year, he avowed his resolution "never to possess another slave by purchase," adding "it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law."

In conformity with these views, the old Confederation of the United States, at a time when the convention for framing our Constitution was in session, by a unanimous vote prohibited slavery forever in all the territory that then belonged to the United States; and one of the very first acts of Washington as President was to approve a law by which that ordinance might "continue to have full effect." On the 6th of May, 1794, in the midst of his cares as President, he devised a plan for the sale of lands in Western Virginia and Western Pennsylvania, and affecting other states for his purpose, he added "I have another motive which makes me earnestly wish for the accomplishment of these things; it is indeed more powerful than the rest, namely to liberate a certain species of property which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings."

And in less than three months after he wrote that Farewell Address to which we have this day listened, he felt himself justified in announcing to Europe his hopes for the future in these words: "Nothing is more certain than that Maryland and Virginia must have laws for the gradual abolition of slavery, and at a period not remote."

But though Virginia and Maryland have not been wise enough to realize the confident prediction of the Father of their Country—though slavery is still permitted in the District of Columbia, from which Madison desired to see it removed—the cause of freedom has been steadily advancing. The line of 36 deg. 30 min., which formed a barrier to the progress of skilled labor to the southward, has been effaced. Our country with our broad crossed the Rocky Mountain; and the wisdom of our people, as they laid the foundations of great empire on the coast of the Pacific, has brought about that to-day, from the Straits of Bering to the Straits of Magellan, the waves of the ocean in joy; for all along that shore, clap their hands in joy; for all along that wide range the land is captured by no hands, but those of the free. Let us be grateful to a good Providence which has established liberty as the rule of our country beyond the possibility of a relapse.

For myself, I was one who desired to postpone, or rather hoped altogether to avoid the collision which has taken place, trusting that society by degrees would work itself clear by its own innate strength, and the virtue and resolution of the community. But slavery has forced upon us the issue, and has lifted up its hand to strike a death-blow at our existence as a people. It has avowed itself a desperate and determined enemy of our national life, of our unity as a republic, and henceforward no man deserves the name of statesman, who would consent to the introduction of that element of weakness and division into any new territory, or the admission of another slave State into the Union. Let us hope rather that the prediction of Washington will prove true, and that Virginia and Maryland will soon take their places as free States by the side of Ohio and Pennsylvania.

## THE CAUSES AND PROBABLE RESULTS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

## The Liberator.

No Union with Slaveholders!

BOSTON, FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 1862.

## LETTERS TO GEORGE THOMPSON, ESQ.

## LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND COADJUTOR:

There are some of our Anti-Slavery friends in England, who are not disposed to give any countenance to calling his friends together to aid in removing the misapprehensions which prevailed in regard to the unhappy conflict now raging in America. It could not be denied that among certain classes in this country, there was a disposition to favor the South; and there was also a general want of information as to the causes which had brought about the present disruption. He had, therefore, taken this opportunity, just before the meeting of Parliament, to ask their American friends to give explanations as to these causes, and as to the probable results of the war.

Bishop McIlvaine then rose, and made a lengthened speech, stating on the whole subject of the war, and its causes, presented in remote, hazy, and somewhat disjointed manner, that there was no cheering word for the North, and evince no sympathy with the Government. They are neither on one side nor on the other; they cannot perceive that the struggle has any particular connection with the cause of negro emancipation in special, or of human liberty in general. Hence, they marvel at the deep interest taken in it by the American Abolitionists, and have sorrowfully come to the conclusion that, in sustaining the Government, we have abandoned our high vantage ground, lowered our moral standard, and allowed ourselves to be carried headlong by a strong tide of popular feeling. Their sincerity is not to be questioned; and, for one, I thank them for their friendly solicitude and admiring counsel, while none the less wondering at what seems to me the lack of sound discrimination as pertaining to American affairs at the present crisis.

How is it, after so many years of faithful and generous cooperation, that they fail to see the intimate relation of this Southern rebellion to the Anti-Slavery movement; or to find in it the most cheering evidence of the growing power and victorious march of that movement? Have they forgotten the state of the country before the banner of immediate emancipation was flung to the breeze—how the slave oligarchy held unquestioned sway over the religion and politics, the government and legislation, the press and the pulpit, the literature and business of the whole country? Then "order reigned in Warsaw"—despotism supreme on the one hand, and subjugation absolute on the other. Then quietude prevailed throughout the land—the quietude of the grave, where there is "no work nor device," and where "dead do all forgotten lie." Then there was no agitation, but all was peace—the peace engendered by universal moral degeneracy and the rankest political corruption. At length, in the order of divine appointment, the Anti-Slavery struggle commenced, that henceforth there should be neither peace nor quietude, but rather tumult and strife, until the overthrow of the republic through incorrigible impotence, or its salvation through the liberation of every bondman, and obedience to the Higher Law. Have they forgotten, by some inexplicable loss of memory, the long eventful history of that struggle—how, from the time that the first number of the *Liberator* made its dismal appearance to effect produced upon the slaveholding interest by the adoption of the Missouri Compromise, prohibiting the formation of new slave States of North of 36 30 north latitude; and by the growth of population, and the consequent increase of the political weight of the free States, while the slave States were almost stationary.

The election of Mr. Lincoln was (he said) only a pretext, a mere convenient moment, for the outbreak of the slaveholding conspiracy, so long prepared, under the operation of the circumstances which he had detailed. The rebellion had some times been attributed to the operation of the tariff laws, but neither the Morrill Tariff, nor any other cause, had the weight of a feather in the matter, except this question of slavery, and the power of exerting it to the (as yet) unoccupied territories of the Union. The Bishop next combated the pre-text of "a legal right of Secession" in the individual States of the Union, quoting the provisions of the Federal Constitution, which proved its fallacy. Its assertion was, in fact, equivalent to that of "a legal right to destroy Government." The question was not "the legal right of Secession," but "the legal right of Revolution." What, he would not say, were the masters' grievances put forward by the seceding States?

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## THE PEOPLE.

It may not be inappropriate for one, who has made such common and perhaps indiscriminate use of the term people, to attempt an explanation of the idea intended to be conveyed by it. This was suggested by listening to an able and eloquent lecture upon that subject by Rev. E. H. Chapin, of New York. The term people, he said, represented nothing tangible or definite; sometimes the synonym of the grossest crimes as well as of the highest virtues. Thence it followed that the popular phrase, *Vox populi vox dei*, was far too sweeping to convey a literal truth. In attempting to define my own opinion of its real and most comprehensive meaning, although perfectly clear in my own mind, as a tangible truth it was capable neither of analysis nor any definite signification. The term people, he said, represented nothing tangible or definite; sometimes the synonym of the grossest crimes as well as of the highest virtues. Thence it followed that the popular phrase, *Vox populi vox dei*, was far too

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It was neither the rashness of John Brown on the one side, nor the utter corruption of the North on the other, which began and carried out the plot that involved the sacrifice of himself and his no less noble confidants. It was the organic sin implanted into our national existence at its birth which had bound us in chains of abominable to the scavengers of the South, and resistance would have been then, as now, the prelude to a civil war, as his resistance to its fundamental laws was the precursor of his own martyrdom. He carried with him the sympathy of the people, and to-day witnesses his glorious resurrection, shaking the four corners of the earth. Whatever may be the conditions of this Union as a consequence of the victories now perching on our banners, in view of which no abolitionist need tremble at the well-grounded fear that the end of the war may not witness the end of slavery, it is upon the leaders of the rebellion that we must rest. Should emancipation be declared to-day, even, it is at their door lies the immense loss of life and treasure, to have prevented which required no violation of the provisions of the Constitution. Of course, we abolitionists know how the whole war might have been avoided; but in judging for the people, we must assume their standpoint. Were it not for confounding the distinctions of vice and virtue, it might be said that the North had been more than conscientiously observant of the constitutional rights of the South, and, consequently, it was too much to expect that she should strike out of existence at the first blow what she had been so carefully guarding. Justice and expediency, however, demanded it.

Perhaps it is owing to my intensely conservative temperament that makes me confess to some degree of respect for John Brown. It is not strange to me that England should become warped and prejudiced towards us in view of our whole existence as a nation, and the absurd position we must now present to the eyes of a stranger. Suppose the principality of Wales should set itself up as an independent oligarchy, presuming to dictate terms to the rest of Great Britain, to which no resistance should be made, would we have any respect for the English Government? Should one of its members of Parliament strike down the Earl of Shaftesbury, or John Bright, for words spoken in debate upon the floor of the House of Commons, and no reparation be demanded, an apology offered, should we not say that it had lost all self-respect, or else it had not strength to defend itself? We stand in that light to-day. Although the strife from James Buchanan to Abraham Lincoln was as great as could reasonably be expected, and we understand how, in the chain of events, all these contradictions and absurdities occur, others may not be able to do it—I mean the mass of the English people. As a government, we stand precisely to-day where we did in the palmiest days of Pierce and Buchanan. The positive vice of the South has arrayed against it the negative virtue of the North. That is all that can be said in defense of general principles, and that is as far as an aristocratic government will dare to go in search of morality.

Reverse the picture. Suppose the question of universal suffrage was the exciting theme of the British public, and that the nobility, fearing the waning of power from their own hands, had risen in rebellion against the Queen and the constitutional party, because a new ministry had been appointed more favorable to the interests of the people. She and her cabinet, desiring to gain the favor of the nobles, ignore all mention of the real question at issue, and will not even permit Ireland to help put down the rebellion. Very likely, America would not reflect to know what they were fighting for, and would be waiting to see on which side the almighty dollar is most likely to cling, before sympathizing with either side. Let me not be misunderstood as defending England. I do not think any of us are capable of impartial judgment on either side, but let not America be induced to shun such development, or to take such an active part in political affairs.

Though at this juncture, presenting the most anomalous aspect to the eyes of foreign nations, and involving ourselves in such a strange commingling of opposite interests as scarcely to know where we do stand, the free school system has been working its beneficent results among us, and the spirit of freedom, surrounded by the most adverse circumstances, has been gradually diffusing its leaven of righteousness, which is yet to exalt us as a nation unparalleled in history when the days of our purification are ended.

Beginning, then, at the formation of this government, it was clearly the voice of the people that slavery should not be recognized; since only two of the thirteen colonies stood out against the original draft of the Constitution. It is true that the intelligent, honest convictions of the majority yielded to the sordid passions of the minority, following the short-sighted policy which is the bane of all nations—the sacrifice of a principle for the attainment of a present end. It is true that the Constitution once adopted, the people yielded implicit obedience to all its provisions, as they pledged themselves to do, by entering into that compact. It is true that they have allowed the petty oligarchy of the South to transcend the limits of that compact, and bind themselves in a thralldom, the like of which existed not on the continent of Europe, where a people boasting of self-government submitted to wrongs and indignities a king never dreamed of imposing.

It is not the first time the base passions of a partition have gained unlimited control by working on the fears of the majority. Then, again, the people have been constantly duped and betrayed by their representatives, who have a fearful responsibility in this matter.

Mr. Foster says it is a misapplication of terms to confound the government with the administration, since the former represents the people directly in Congress assembled. In one sense it does, and in another it does not. There is a difference between the unrepresented and the represented, and the majority, which is, properly speaking, the constructive element, and the organizing force of the legislative department. It is said that when organization begins, freedom parts with a portion of itself. When a man accepts an office under the Government, he pledges himself to observe all its requirements, and is no longer the independent unit, free to act out his own individual convictions. If his sentiments change on any question therein concerned, he must resign his office before he can consistently give them expression. The same is true of the Church. The ministry and representative members are the expositors of the creed and tenets of their respective organizations, to which the great body of the laity yield their indiscriminate assent, regardless of many of them ignorant of the true position in which they are thus placed, relative to the vital questions of the age.

God has so constituted the human soul, that the perception of a truth and the ability to appreciate a great idea are not dependent on opportunities for culture, but are the common birthright of all. Only where and there an individual has the ready gift to arrange his thoughts in a systematic form of expression, either with his pen or in easy flow of speech; but the masses are ready to give their unerring verdict upon the merit or demerit of such productions.

It would be an insult to the humanity of any age to say that the Fugitive Slave Law was the sad voice of the people. Rather let it remain as the sad moment of the bewildered intellect and demoralization of one who fell a victim not only to the temptations of office, but also to that heaviest scourge of all nations, love of the wine-cup; and in his fall his power for evil was proportionate to the strong hold his remarkable qualities had given him upon the affections of the people.

How far Boston, the far-famed city of mists, represents the intelligent convictions of the people, let the events of the past year testify. So far back as 1855, when Wm. Lloyd Garrison was secreted in a jail to save his life, (for which let Massachusetts forever hang her head in shame when it is spoken,) it was a bold in broadcloth, representing the commercial interests which dragged him through the streets of Boston.

## MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL FACULTIES.

Proceeding thus, with due regard to their circumstances and capacities, not ignoring their present unfitness, but honestly striving to remove their disabilities, we must do our best to prepare them or their posterity to enter into all the privileges and blessings of an advanced civilization.

We may hope and aspire to do for these step-children of nature all that their masters have failed to do, but we must certainly begin by doing what their masters did not and could not omit. Whatever uncertainty may rest upon the future of these negroes, the duty of the present hour is plain. So far as is required, we must first make provision for their immediate bodily wants, and preside over their labor, regarding it, however, as a condition indispensable to their civilization that they should, as soon as possible, be made to take care of themselves: we must also enforce order and justice; we must begin at once the work of intellectual and religious instruction.

Our second duty is to explore and survey the field before us. We are to study a momentous question, involving, sooner or later, the rights and happiness of millions. Providence has accorded to us the most favorable opportunities; it has, as it were, given out to us the power to provide for the culture of the "Contrabands." After acknowledging in terms of commendation the receipt of his Report, already published, Mr. Chase says—

"The whole authority of this Department over the subjects of your Report is derived from the 5th Section of the Act to provide for the Collection of Duties, and for other purposes, approved July 15, 1861, by which the President is authorized to permit commercial intercourse with any part of the country declared to be in rebellion."

It is understood that an Association of judicious and humane citizens has been formed in Boston, which may act in concert, or be consolidated with a similar Association in New York and other cities, and that, through the agency of these Associations or one of them, persons may be employed to proceed with the sanction of the Government, to take charge of the abandoned plantations under the general plan suggested by yourself.

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